

The Rock and Roll Era and Its Effect on Teens

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During the beginning of the Rock and Roll era, which began in the early 1950s, the United States was divided by racial problems, but many people gained a sense of equality through Rock and Roll because black artists were becoming more popular with audiences of all colors. Chuck Berry was one of the first Rock and Roll performers to appeal to both blacks and whites.

Chuck Berry was an inspiration to young black children. Some of the children or young adults who listened to his music were inspired to follow their dreams, and some of them actually were very successful. Many of the early Rock stars were role models to most teens. There were three people thought that started the Rock and Roll era and made big hits.

Elvis Presley had the greatest impact on early Rock and Roll. He was good looking, had a unique sound, and delivered an electrifying performance that made teens swoon and parents shudder. Elvis Presley drove many teen girls delirious. Many said that they would do anything just to meet him. Most of his songs were loud and this upset many parents.

Little Richard was another inventor of Rock and Roll. His wild performances and rebellious music made him popular with audiences of all colors. He helped define early

Rock and Roll and greatly influenced other groups that followed him such as the Beatles and Rolling Stones. Many of these groups were also a big hit with teens and developing Rock and Roll.

Buddy Holly's popularity rivaled that of Elvis Presley's. Holly was a singer, song writer, and he played instruments. He wrote and performed many of the hit songs of the 1950s. His incredible career sadly was cut short by a plane crash in 1959. His incredible life story was made into a famous movie called "The Bad Teacher". This was one of many movies that teens saw and in which Rock and Roll was performed.

The advancements in technology also helped the spread of Rock and Roll. Many Chicago teens listened to WLS 890. WLS was a radio station that played the most popular songs at that time. It played songs that teens could relate to, because most of the songs were about cars and young love.

Rock and Roll gave teens their own special identity and voice during the 1950s. Many teenagers saw Rock music as a telling their own life and likes. According to some people who were teenagers at that time, some parents found rock music disturbing. Their children would play loud music, or some formed bands. Many teens tried to imitate how artists lived, dressed, and styled their hair. The teens sang their songs and imitated their dance moves.

Many teens also changed their likes and dislikes of cars. They tried to have the cars that famous Rock and Roll singers had. Also they listened to the radio to hear the hit

songs and the new songs that were always coming out.

Rock and Roll music helped change the world; it made many teenagers able to express themselves through music. It had a great impact on both blacks and whites because it caused unity in a time when the country was divided by racial problems. Rock music is still listened to today, and still has a lot of feeling, but it meant much more to the teens that listened to it through the radio and lived through the era now called the Rock and Roll era. [From Mag Ian McLagan, “All the Rage, A Riotous Romp Through Rock and Roll History; “Popular Music of the 1950s-piano/vocal”, www.piano-pal.com/50spv.htm (Sept, 30, 2004); Rick Rumick, “WLS Silver Dollar Survey”, www.users.quest.net/~oldieslooon/wls101460.htm (Sept. 30, 2004); Maria Moctezuma, Student Historian’s student interview with Sabas Aranda, Oct. 7, 2004.]